



OFFICE OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

PO BOX 202501
McCulloch
HELENA MT 59620-2501
Superintendent
www.metnet.state.mt.us
(406) 444-3680

Linda

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
September 5, 2003

For More Information:
Joe Lamson, 444-3160

Annual Montana Student Test Scores Released

Superintendent of Public Instruction Linda McCulloch today released 2002-03 test scores for Montana 4th, 8th and 11th grade students. Montana students in all grades scored above the national average in all five subject areas of reading, math, science, language arts and social studies.

"This was the third year all Montana students participated in the same tests and should provide more useful information. Again, Montana students scored well above the national averages in all grades and subject areas," reported Superintendent Linda McCulloch.

"There were some small encouraging changes in the overall scores from last year," said McCulloch. "Most of the changes involved small movements of several points in a particular grade and subject area. In total scores increased in seven subjects and grades and decreased in three areas."

"Montanans need to keep in mind that test scores are only one indicator of student and school success. The basic purpose of testing is to improve learning and teaching. We need to identify and support those programs and strategies that are working. We also need to direct energy and resources to those students that appear to be struggling," noted McCulloch.

The Montana Board of Public Education requires all accredited Montana schools to annually report student achievement scores for grades 4, 8, and 11 in reading, language arts, math, science and social studies.

The test scores are for the 2002-03 school year. A total of 33,830 Montana 4th, 8th, and 11th grade students participated in the tests. All 4th and 8th grade students took the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills and 11th grade students took the Iowa Tests of Educational Development. It should be noted the federal Family Education Rights and Privacy Act and Montana statutes require certain student information be protected and used only by those persons who have a direct educational responsibility for that student's instruction. Consequently, the release of test scores for any individual school with five or fewer students in a grade is not reported. This involves more than 100 of Montana's smallest school districts.

Reports for each school and school district, are available from the Montana Office of Public Instruction on its web site, www.opi.state.mt.us/Assessment/index.html or in print form. Each school report includes the grade level tested, the number of students taking the test, and the number of students enrolled. Each school

report includes four student performance levels ranging from “novice” to “advanced”, a National Percentile Rank, Normal Curve Equivalent for all five subject areas.

In addition information is available on how different groups of students perform. The scores are also sorted by the size of school attended, students with disabilities, gender, race, and students participating in the free or reduced lunch program.

“Montana 4th grade students scoring at the ‘proficient’ and ‘advanced’ levels ranged from the 81% in science to 74% in math. Our 8th grade students at the ‘proficient’ and ‘advanced’ performance levels ranged from 77% in science to 68% in language arts,” said Supt. Linda McCulloch. “And among our 11th grade students, those at the ‘proficient’ and ‘advanced’ levels ranged from 82% in science to 76% in language arts. This compares to the national average of 60% of students performing at the combined ‘proficient’ and ‘advanced’ levels in all subjects and grades.”

"The 'traditional gender gap ' in which girls tend to excel in reading and language arts, while boys do better in math and science is not evident in these Montana test results," notes Linda McCulloch. "Montana girls tend to score at or above the same level as boys in all subjects and grades. By the 11th grade, Montana girls do tend to achieve higher scores in reading and the language arts, however they also score at about the same level as boys in math and somewhat higher than the boys in science."

“When examining the scores, Montanans need to understand that a variety of factors impact the results. These scores are a ‘snapshot’ of our schools at a particular point in time. This is only one additional measure to gain a better understanding of a school's strengths and challenges. It is absolutely critical we use this information in a constructive manner to help all students improve and design programs to meet their needs. It should be the goal of every school to continually strive to move each student to higher performance levels,” points out Linda McCulloch.

“Montana test scores, while remaining among the top in the nation have, have stabilized while other states continue to improve,” concludes McCulloch. “If we don’t seriously address the very real problems such as a looming educator shortage and adequate state support for schools, we will very likely see a decline in the quality of the education our children receive. We need to address these problems now. Waiting will only create far worse and more costly problems.”

Montana 2001-03 Student Statewide Test Scores: Percentage of Students Scoring at Proficient or Above

	2001 Grade 4	2002 Grade 4	2003 Grade 4	2001 Grade 8	2002 Grade 8	2003 Grade 8	2001 Grade 11	2002 Grade 11	2003 Grade 11
Reading	79%	76%	79%	73%	70%	71%	78%	78%	78%
Language Arts	76%	76%	76%	71%	68%	68%	77%	74%	76%
Math	73%	72%	74%	69%	69%	69%	78%	75%	76%
Social Studies	78%	77%	79%	73%	71%	71%	82%	82%	79%
Science	82%	80%	81%	77%	78%	78%	81%	82%	82%

IMPORTANT NOTE: On August 14, 2003 the Office of Public Instruction released the 2003 "Adequate Yearly Progress" Report for Montana schools as required by President Bush's "No Child Left Behind" Act. The determination of whether a school had achieved "adequate yearly progress" was based on a three year average of reading and math test scores. The 2003 Iowa Test Scores are only one part of that average and consequently do not represent the "adequate yearly progress" score.